

ANDREW LANG
AND THE
MAID OF FRANCE
François
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ANDREW LANG AND THE MAID OF FRANCE

It is half a thousand years since the ordeal of Jeanne d'Arc reached its climax on the Old Market Place at Rouen in the spring of 1431.

Five centuries may well soften with distance the harshest outlines of the past ; and the fate of the Maid in our passive remembrance has the faint appeal of long-buried tragedies. But the pangs of pity and grief are reawakened as soon as our gaze stirs the dim image into renewed life.

England and France joined in the guilt ; they are at one in the homage of admiration and regret. I may be excused if I claim here as a burden of solidarity what is otherwise an honour, membership of the University of Paris : the Sorbonne took the lead among the abettors of the crime, and showed itself, as Andrew Lang puts it, 'capable de tout'.

A very different association inseparably binds the memory of Andrew Lang with that of the Maid of France. The champion of lost causes and threatened ideals, he stood up in defence of her fair name when, as he thought, the misapplied talent of a great writer did it serious harm. His book deserves the gratitude of British and French alike. The former owe him the best portrait of Jeanne d'Arc in their language, and the most scholarly justification of the reverence with which their chivalrous sense of justice has invested her image. The debt of the French is not less, it is greater ; only from one of themselves could they have expected such full and fervent reparation for the wrong one of themselves had done.

In the story of that book there lies a paradox rich in significance. It brings home to us the ironical ways of time, the shifting from one country to another of spiritual initiative. The genius of France grew and ripened before that of England. The Maid, born of the purest essence of that genius, was the flower of its early consciousness. Too precocious for her century, she was done to death by selfish, cruel pedants of the Schools, of the Church, and of government. The French forsook, and French doctors condemned her; the English destroyed her life and defiled her name. France awoke first from the shame of betrayal and indifference; the memory of Jeanne d'Arc was rehabilitated; national feeling gathered round the beautiful figure of the martyr. National sentiment in England long stood in the way of that very awakening, and grudged the Maid the unstinted recognition which to-day belongs to her in the hearts of both peoples, finally reconciled and friendly.

Meanwhile, the positive, logical spirit which is at least one of the most typical attributes of France, had been at work, testing values in the cold light of reason. The Maid was scrutinized as an enigma, an irritating wonder; impatient critics of the supernatural in experience fastened upon the truth that she was, after all, no more than human; and in their eagerness they did not spare her character or her achievement. Voltaire had treated her with utter disrespect; the eighteenth century had thrown out hints of hidden prompters and wire-pullers in her extraordinary career. The nineteenth, with Michelet, Quicherat, Siméon Luce, a host of others, cleared her image of legend and added lustre to its beauty. But soon after the beginning of the

twentieth, Anatole France, the heir of the Voltairean spirit, wrote his *Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, a literary masterpiece, and the complete expression of the realistic, somewhat cynical view.

Then it appeared that indeed the tables were turned. From the other side of the Channel there arose a challenge to the greatest living French man of letters. It was a Scotsman's voice, and Andrew Lang would have sanctioned the remark that it must be a Scotsman's voice: had not Scotland 'stood with the Maid always'? Had not an affinity of genius and of fate placed Scottish men-at-arms and comrades by her side to the end?

It is now possible to appraise the rights and wrongs of that quarrel with no suspicion of partisanship. The excessive depreciation of Anatole France which followed his death has yielded to a saner estimate of his important place in literature. One may give the Scotsman the best of the fight every way without seeming to join in the hue and cry against the fame of a writer who perhaps, while he lived, had even more than his due share of incense. Distinguished as were the achievements of Lang in many branches of study and writing, his record as a biographer and defender of the Maid is not the least of his securities against oblivion. Every admirer of genuine heroism, as well as every honest student of history, is in debt to the gifted Scot, now buried in the city with the long past and the bracing air which he loved, Saint Andrews 'by the northern sea'. In that chapter of his many-sided activity, thinking from the standpoint of a foreigner, he proved truer to the more profound spiritual will of France than did the son who claimed to embody her

inmost spirit, and bore her name as a token of his proud allegiance. France is not all in the fearless, ruthless logic that denies what it cannot explain away; from the zeal of her intellectual fervour, she again and again works back to a more complex, a more creative mood. Her real self is not so much akin to the disguised dogmatism of the sceptic as to the gentle tolerant humanity of the Maid.

Since it is the faith of to-day that nations grow alike and meet on the deeper levels of their personalities, we may say that the true Scot, Andrew Lang, following the bent of his native genius, appealed from the France of periods to that of all time.

The facts are eloquent. Early in 1908 Anatole France's *Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* was published, and met with instant success. Twenty-seven issues followed each other rapidly. Before 1908 was over, Lang had studied the French work and determined to answer it; he had read up the literature of the subject, going into every kind of historical evidence, subjecting the texts of both 'Procès' to the closest scrutiny; he had formed his own conclusions, planned and written out his biography, gone through the printing, and placed *The Maid of France* before the public. Moreover, while preparing his main blow, he had kept up a guerrilla warfare, denouncing some of his adversary's errors in several magazine or newspaper articles. There never was more tireless industry, a quicker ripening of research and thought into expression.

And yet the book is mature and shows very few signs of being hastily put together. Lang made capital out of Anatole France's inaccuracies; his

constant fault-finding and his occasional shafts of satire imply a high standard of correctness in his own performance. The claim is justified, and the Scottish writer's scholarship, under the circumstances, astonishing. Two or three slight inadvertencies, the wrong translation of a Latin text—to which he confessed soon after—are surely flaws as trifling as might be expected. How could he find time even to think out his major points?

A ready explanation is forthcoming: Lang's versatility, which was rather the quick adjustment of an ever active, universally curious mind; and his well-known power of work. Still, one wonders whether such an account is convincing. Was there not anything else—a general preparation, a previous acquaintance with the subject, the germ of a theory? When Lang's imagination, and his susceptibilities, were fired by Anatole France's work, was not his idea of the Maid preformed, eager to spring into existence, in radiant indignant purity, at the touch of the Frenchman's critical slurs? We know that it was. From Lang's early beginnings, he had been familiar with French literature and history. *Ballads and Lyrics of Old France* was his first venture; all through his poetic life he gave English imitations of medieval French patterns—ballade, triolet, and rondeau. More than that, three of his poems: 'A Scot to Jeanne d'Arc', 'Jeanne d'Arc', 'How the Maid Marched from Blois'—reveal his keen and early response to Jeanne's magnetic appeal. The third piece betokens at least some acquaintance with the records of her career. And does not this plain statement, prefixed to the first, speak volumes as to the fond personality of sentimental

relationship which Lang felt to be the chief figure among those martyrs of lost causes who are sung in the 'Loyal Lyrics'? 'Two archers of the name of Lang, Lain, or Laing were in the French service about 1507'; that is to say, long after the death of the Maid; but to a poet, within the lingering glamour of her presence . . .

One of that name I would were kin to me
Who, in the Scottish Guard
Won this for his reward,
To fight for France, and memory of thee . . .

It seems hardly necessary to insist further that Lang's impassioned devotion to the annals of his own country, his general *History of Scotland*, kept him in touch with the French background inseparable from Scottish civilization and Scottish affairs. So we have proof that his attention had been drawn, as a special object, to the Maid of France; and that he had toyed with the fascinating theme of her personality. Had he meant to do more? This is a purely biographical problem which Andrew Lang has refused us the necessary data to solve. He would not let his life be told; it has not proved possible to add anything to the scanty store of the known facts.

One thing we may say: there is no evidence that Lang's quick eye did not run over the documents of the case for the first time in 1908. To all appearances, he laid the foundation and raised his structure in an extraordinarily short interval. But while his portrait of the Maid was modelled on the actual cast of her features, as he saw them, the light of the painting and something of its soul were derived from the artist's own self. His Jeanne d'Arc was, after all, the

daughter of his brain. In his book are involved a philosophy of life, a conception of history, a view of character; even more, an attitude towards some of the personal problems of belief. It needed Lang the anthropologist, the historian of religion, the psychologist—last not least, the poet—in one word, Lang the man, to write *The Maid of France*. With his whole mind and heart he took arms against, as he thought, a traitor subtly masked; and like a knight succouring a lady in distress, tilted his lance—to win what one must pronounce victory with honour.

Was Anatole France a treacherous foe to innocent fame? In his dealings with him, Andrew Lang tried to be just. He was so; less completely, however, than he desired. He underlined the few points on which agreement was possible; once or twice, upon issues which the French writer had raised, he acknowledged a debt. Lastly, he paid homage, with unfeigned courtesy, to the quality of an art whose prestige with most readers was only too strong, depriving them of the liberty of their judgement.

But those softer touches hardly tone down what remains a most damaging indictment. Anatole France, Lang points out, is no historian; his attempt in a field little familiar and less congenial is not only presuming, it proves fatal, and his purpose is wrecked on the rock of sheer incompetence. He charges the Maid with a poor memory and a confused mind; but what, by the same token, should we say to his own perverse habit of self-contradiction? The statement he has made on one page, he will forget on another. . . . He does so, at least, now and then; and of

those accidents Lang, perhaps, makes too much; they leave unimpaired a substantial unity of development.

More serious is the unsoundness of the very foundation upon which the work is built. Anatole France's references to documents, no doubt, are imposing; they build up, as Lang remarks, independently of their value, a good bibliography of the subject. But what of them? Put them to the test, and a large portion will prove irrelevant. If authority can be found at all for the statement, it is not in the passage quoted; that very often does not bear any relation to the theme. . . . Indeed, upon occasion, it will support conclusions just opposed. The discrepancy between the story and its so-called sources is so patent that one cannot help wondering whether the same person digested the texts and selected the quotations. . . . This, to historians, is the unpardonable sin; and Lang, however broad his outlook may be, has faith in the method of history; ready as he is to curb the dogmatism of science, he remains a scientist at heart. His indignation rose when in the 28th edition of the *Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, purporting to be 'revised', Anatole France corrected only a few of his errors, and mentioned with gentle irony the praiseworthy scruples ('les louables scrupules') of Mr. Andrew Lang. The pugnacious Scot then followed up his adversary on his own ground, and at once (1909) printed in French, probably with the help of some able translator, a series of chapters dealing more directly with the main points of his criticism (*La Jeanne d'Arc de M. Anatole France*). This book is a useful complement to *The Maid of France*, and gives us, in some respects, fuller expressions of its author's views.

From the pitiless survey of his oversights, Anatole France does not come out unscathed. But he is no mere stickler at details; he has a large purpose—a portrait to limn, an interpretation to offer. Now is the time to take a look at his actual performance.

Anatole France's Jeanne d'Arc is a simple girl, great in her devotion to unselfish ends, in her courage and fortitude, but gifted with nothing more than plain sense; her mind is weak, credulous, and easily influenced; if not properly hysterical, she hovers on the verge of hysteria. Her 'voices' and her 'saints' are of course mere hallucinations. She is a mascot to the Dauphin and the French army, never a leader. In matters military she remains a child; circumstances and the chances of war have most to do with her victories; she makes grievous mistakes, and fails when she loses her luck. Her motives and acts, her political and religious watchwords, are prompted behind the scenes by obscure priests and monks, clever enough to see that she could be an efficient instrument to the advantage of the Church and to that of France, in so far as the Church and France had common interests. Her career, on the whole, is a striking example of the way in which small causes will produce far-reaching effects, and of the close association between a saintly character and a deranged mind. When probed by the critical eye of the cool observer, it is seen to hold no mystery. The seething superstitions of the Middle Ages would foster by the score the prophets and the self-appointed enthusiasts with a mission. The Maid was a visionary above the common, but of no different kind from other visionaries; dim figures of excited women and half-witted shepherds, seen about her, before and after, give her

life its true historical setting; there she appears what she really was: a normal product of her time.

Painted with skill, and, in spite of many small inaccuracies, with a remarkable grasp of fifteenth-century conditions, material and moral, that portrait formed a whole, an interpretation systematic enough, as soon as some inconsistencies were ignored. The trend of Anatole France's effort was all to reduce the Maid from a superhuman eminence to human quality. He was thus led persistently to shade down the dazzling brilliance with which the worship of centuries had endowed her features. On the other hand, there would be moments when he stopped in the act of so doing; when the extraordinary incidents and traits of which her short career is full would force themselves upon him; he would then pause, make admissions that perhaps went farther than he thought; but those vacillations, while they offered Lang an opening, did not alter the perspective, and left the grey tones of the picture very much what they were.

Against that image, Lang's sense of the truth and his feelings rose equally in anger. He could not, and he would not, accept it; and his study of the documents confirmed his irreconcilable hostility. When he had once decided not to let the French work pass without recording his protest, he had his choice of two methods. The interpretation might be attacked historically, as failing to square with the facts; or it might be impugned as doing injustice to the moral and sentimental values of the subject. That Lang was aware of both lines of approach is quite plain; but it is characteristic of him that he repressed his indignation

and left his moral revolt in the background. Anatole France claimed science as his guiding principle; the motive he put forward was the resolve to see through fiction and look things in the face; he must be taken at his word and judged by his own standard. This meant that his thesis would hardly be discussed on general grounds; it was, after all, a series of affirmations, a chain of successive conclusions, each one of which had to be tackled on its own merits.

Lang's book, *The Maid of France*, is both a continuous narrative, involving a positive interpretation, and the sum total of those arguments. Anatole France's biography is often mentioned by name, at other times alluded to; when not explicitly called up as the basis and starting-point of each discussion, its implicit presence is none the less felt; all the pages of the book, but a few, are more or less aimed at it. The wonder is that, in spite of all, Lang's story should unwind itself with so natural and easy a progress; that it should be read with such pleasure, apart from all polemical intent, and hold us fast through the grip of events whose inexorable march is rendered with simple, sober vigour.

Into most of those arguments we need not enter here. Let it suffice to say that on practically all the points which Lang raises he wins a signal advantage. He shows himself the better historian, the fairer interpreter of documents. Even his reading of the texts is more accurate, when a knowledge of fifteenth-century French is implied. His acquaintance with the international civilization of the Middle Ages is more thorough than that of his rival. Often enough, his previous study of old Scotland stands him in good

stead towards the intelligence of contemporary French manners; and incidents of Scottish history unexpectedly throw light upon parallel episodes in the annals of France. We must fall back, in the last instance, upon the decisive issue: his analysis of the Maid's character and motives is guided by a more penetrating, because more sympathetic, perception of psychological facts. From the repeated experience of those discussions, pushed forth with a coolness under which the warmth of feeling is just revealed, leading up to statements forcibly worded, but always careful, there rises in the reader a sense of unqualified trust. Out of the extensive literature of the subject, we may choose other interpretations of the Maid, equally interesting, differently convincing; their perspective may vary widely from Lang's, their light be more brilliant; but there is none whose authority grows upon us with a more gradual, more gentle and irresistible touch.

The tactics which Lang preferred—as more objective and, probably, as better suiting his manner—allow him only to fight in skirmishes. He hardly ever tries to gather his forces for a pitched battle, and to get at his adversary's central position; at the purpose which inspires the whole work. The few hints of that kind which he throws out now and then are the least acceptable part of his book. Taking stock of the tendency ever present in Anatole France's judgments and remarks, he charges him with a conscious attempt to belittle the Maid; with a sort of spite; a motive of actual hostility. That is where his usual penetration fails him, and he shows himself less than fair.

A juster perception of his adversary's mood might have shown Lang that what he had to contend with, at bottom, was a not ungenerous though inverted enthusiasm; an emotion of some kind, and, when all was said, an intuition like his own. The different views of the two writers can be traced to conflicting tempers of mind. Now what is a temper but an organic demand that experience shall conform to a preconceived and habitual tone of feeling? Anatole France's emotion is, so to say, an abstract and a rationalist one; it is the glow of an intellect ranging freely over a course of history from which the rank growths of supernatural explanations have been weeded out. A bland ironical sceptic, the author of *Thaïs* and *L'Anneau d'Améthyste* felt that to him it belonged to 'explain' Jeanne d'Arc, to interpret her in strictly human terms. There lies the real germ of his book. His intuition at one bound overtook the slow progress of research and forestalled its conclusions. It gave him the only image of the Maid that a purely scientific intelligence could accept. She was to be weak and pitiable; disconnected, haphazard causes were to account for her extraordinary achievements: is not the shrewd perverseness of things and the essence of irrationality the last triumph of the rationalist? Around her were to be mediocre creatures of flesh and blood; and the only inspiring hero in the picture would thus be the silent, ever-suffering people, whose longing for peace and instinctive patriotism she voiced for a time. But for that democratic humanitarianism, the last strain of avowed sentiment in Anatole France's philosophy, history to him was all a crushing retort to the fond illusions of the

optimist, the superstitious, and the believer. We recognize that mood; it has long been familiar to us; it is substantially that of Voltaire and Gibbon. It may seem dry, but at bottom an imaginative ardour suffuses it; in its essence it is a passion and it is a faith. Like all faiths, it bears impatiently the burden of demonstration and proof. And that is why Anatole France was so careless of his references and took such little heed of Lang's corrections; his authorities—or those which had been raked up for him by some scholarly hack—were not actually part and parcel of his work; they were external tags, and he could see them with composure clipped off or shoved about by his critics. Historians insisted on quoting texts, and he was taking his stand as a responsible historian; so he must awe his reader with a bibliography and footnotes. Only, it was not from the books cited and the documents referred to that his conception of the Maid was formed. . . . One cannot help regretting that Lang, whose attitude had its deep-laid instinctive origins as well, did not fasten upon that central motive of his adversary; if he had analysed and discussed it, he might have made his own standpoint, and his own intuition, so much clearer.

But reticence as to ultimate beliefs was ingrained in his thoroughly British character. So it will be left for us to try and bring to light the underlying philosophy of his book. Meanwhile, we have to do with the heroine whose image reigns in the shrine he has piously built for her.

The difference which strikes one at once is that his portrait is warm and tingles with repressed emotion. Lang's master-intuition tries to be scientific, like that

of Anatole France; but it is much less intellectual; and no one will be even tempted to charge it with dryness. His notion of history does not require that he shall take an abstract pleasure in a detached view of the absurdities of things; and so he cannot help feeling, which his adversary can help. The emotion indeed is contained, but there it is, and shows itself at times unashamedly. Anatole France explained Jeanne d'Arc by accounting for each idea in her mind and each decision of her will—most often through derived impressions and external influences. Lang does not watch her coolly, critically; her beautiful selflessness, the exquisite pathos of her life, leave him no choice; to the appeal of so much purity, courage, and suffering, he responds with manly admiration and infinite pity. His method to understand her and make her intelligible to us is sympathy. Shall we find fault with him on that score? Much rather shall we wonder that an impassible attitude may have seemed tenable. Even to readers hardened by the shocks of history, the tragedy of the Maid is inexpressibly moving, just as it breathes the enthusiasm of chastened grief which is the highest dramatic emotion. That simple human nature should have risen to such nobleness is an ever fresh encouragement to intoxicating hopes of our moral future; that the world should have treated the martyr as it did strikes in us the deepest chords of a compassion and a shame which from the innocent victim pass out to the race itself that could be stained with such deeds. The analogy with another scene is inevitable, and Lang has not feared to face it; the sight of Jeanne's ordeal at Rouen calls up the anguish of the most unforgivable crimes

in the dark record of man, and no Passion cries out louder to heaven. It adds nothing to the value of Anatole France's philosophical detachment that he should have stifled the surge of those emotions; and Lang's book owes them a subdued pathos which leaves its logical strength unimpaired.

It is no part of Lang's purpose to minimize the exceptional element in the personality and life of the Maid. Her career, he declares roundly, is 'the most marvellous episode in our history, and in all histories'. Let full stress be laid on conditions and circumstances: still there she is, the human agent from whose unprovoked initiative ever-widening circles of consequences have sprung. That she had unique powers who can deny? She 'wrought such work as well might seem miraculous'. Her place, in the spiritual development of our kind, is with the foremost examples of religious and prophetic inspiration. Her insight pierced to the core of things; her untutored sense grasped the essentials of a problem at once; although not acquainted with the technique of strategy, she had military genius of the first order. What is such a gift after all but the sublime of common sense? Her instinct we watch at work in all fields during the short span of her active life; she saw through the politics and the diplomacy of her time; her judgement flew at the right and sterling qualities of men; whom she liked one could trust; with hollow characters she showed no sympathy. Had the French King and his counsellors taken her advice more openly and fully, the wonderful restoration she effected in the affairs of France would have been even more swift and decisive. As it was, her influence on the course of events cannot be overstated.

That she saved the independence of her country from probable destruction is a downright fact.

What becomes, then, of Anatole France's pet theory, and of his view that the Maid was the passive instrument of 'fraudulent priests'? Even such a guarded scientist as Dr. George Dumas, in a magazine article, had hailed the surmise as the most rational effort of the modern school. Lang's answer is that the documents afford us no glimpse of those priests, and so the conjecture is merely arbitrary. But he has no taste for the defensive, and with a few vigorous blows hammers the theory to pieces. It is absurd, if only one will think of it, to suppose that any schemer, ecclesiastic or lay, would have acted against all plausibility and reason by expecting Jeanne to do just what she did. 'No priest could have taught her, through her Voices, that only an ignorant peaceful peasant girl, ... in male costume, could drive the English out of France.' It would have been, to human sense, 'the quintessence of crazy folly'. The argument must be confessed destructive.

The assimilation of the Maid to the obscure visionaries of her time fares no better. Here again, we see the contrasted play of two instinctive methods, two mental attitudes. Anatole France must explain the higher by the lower. To that craving he sacrifices some obvious elements of the problem. Lang's point is to leave the higher its chance; to see things objectively and concretely, with the wealth of their individual differences. Between Jeanne and the other visionaries the common factor is the visions; but should it be regarded as eminent, when in most essential respects the cases are so wide apart? Here we are reminded

of William James, and the pluralist's fight against the fallacies of the generalizing mind. . . . Genius of a high creative order is stamped upon the personality of the Maid, upon the acts of her will, her rapid, sure intuitions. To the group of genius she belongs, with 'Shelley, Socrates, Mohammed, Luther, Pascal, Cromwell', who all had visions; not to the motley crew of the 'sham Pucelles and vapid dreamers'.

It cannot be said that Lang sets no value upon the historical background. He devotes chapters to 'The Task of Jeanne d'Arc; Political Conditions'; 'Domrémy; Prophecies, Faith, and Fairies'; and 'Domrémy in Time of War'. In that setting of facts and influences the girl's personality develops; but far from being a product of her surroundings, as with Anatole France, she transcends them by the marvellous strength of her unconscious heroism, of her pure, straight, invincible will. At one swift step she rises above her family, her class, her age; a maid of seventeen, she faces the hard narrow way of her self-appointed task, enters it by sheer force of gentle obstinacy, and walks up unflinchingly to the predestined end, a clear intimation of which is borne in upon her; she knows that her time is short, that she will last one year, hardly more. . . .

Not the least difficult problem was to leave Jeanne her easy natural manner; to make her a Sibyl at times, in the flashing sureness of her instinctive mind, and yet just a peasant girl, unaffected in her modesty, bowing to all those she regarded as her betters; to steer between the well-meant realism of Anatole France, which turns her into a simpleton, and the humorous idealism of Mr. Bernard Shaw, for instance,

to whom his Saint Joan is a convenient mouthpiece for his theories. Lang's native sense of the just mean carried him safely over; his Jeanne, simple and spontaneous but clear-sighted and firm, true to her sex and youth, and yet somehow moving on a plane of strange spiritual eminence, is one of the most successful images of the Maid in all literature. Her quality of essential heroism makes her a match for the radiant figures of fiction; but, by the side of her sisters in Shakespeare or Meredith, she is outlined with singular reserve as well as force; the historian's strict adherence to facts and texts has severely held down his poetic imagination, whose impatient throb one feels under the restraint.

Domrémy, the birthplace of Jeanne, had been to Anatole France a nightmare of misery and constant alarms; Lang sees it in a less sinister light, as a Border village, where men and women snatch rest and peace from the jaws of danger. Through the tissue of fact and tradition he proceeds cautiously but calmly, with no display of sceptical irony. His manner is one of tolerant sympathy, not credulous, but not in principle averse to whatever seems a little above the level of daily experience. A shy humour now and then wakes up a gleam in the narrative. A popular belief would aver that the birds fed in the Maid's lap. Anatole France dismisses the obvious legendary accretion with a shrug. Lang sees no reason to wave the flag of the higher criticism. The occurrence, he remarks, has nothing to surprise us, 'if the child sat quietly alone'. . . . That Lang's humour should peep out now and then, who shall regret? That the Scot he was should manage to find food for it in his good friends the

English, who should wonder? The English, after Agincourt and before Patay, carried everything before them in France; they were stout fighters, those knights and yeomen; but Lang has found out an unsuspected cause of their facile triumphs: 'really, the chief weapon of the English seems to have been their Hurrah, "cry moult grande et terrible", which was singularly disconcerting to the French, as naïve documents of the time do show. . . .' When Jeanne was cross-examined at Poitiers by the doctors, one of them rebuked her for her warlike notions. 'Professor Aymeri said, "If God wishes to deliver France, he does not need men at arms". Jeanne knew that the English were not the kind of devils who go out merely under stress of prayer and fasting; she said, "In God's name the men at arms will fight, and God will give the victory." Wherewith Professor Aymeri was content.'

And so the 'pensive dark-haired girl with the happy face' hears her Voices, sees her visions, and we start with her on her adventurous ride to the distant goal, the right heir to the throne, the Dauphin. The tale once more unfolds itself, holding us fast in ever-fresh interest and awe. Lang's narrative is more animated than that of Anatole France; he is more receptive to the dramatic significance of things. . . . Chinon, Poitiers, Tours, appear in quick succession; Orleans is liberated, the week of victories culminates at Patay, the king is crowned at Reims, and the ebbing light of afternoon changes to the gloom of evening. What has happened? Has the Maid lost faith in herself? Has the spell of a supernatural influence been withdrawn from her? While he refuses to rule out, in principle, any ultimate interpretation, Lang is content to take

his stand upon the assured facts. The downfall of Jeanne can be traced plainly to the selfishness, the narrow views, the jealousies and crooked diplomacy of the king's counsellors. They did consciously betray her. Let a Regnault de Chartres and a La Trémouille bear the heaviest share of the guilt. . . .

And now the catastrophe draws near. The English, the French, the Burgundians, the age itself, all are accomplices. 'To these infamies had fallen chivalry and faith; knights were eager to burn the bravest of their enemies, a woman; priests were determined to destroy the sweetest Christian alive.' Still, Lang does not find it in him to curse even Jeanne's ecclesiastical tormentors: 'Who are we that we should judge them, creatures as they were full of terror, of superstition, and of hatred, with brows of brass and brains of lead; scientific, too, as the men of her time reckoned science. . . .' With the end itself Lang deals soberly. 'Perhaps,' he says, 'the less we think of all this the better.' He stresses the slow intolerable torture of the prison, the bullying and the cold cruelty of the trial, more than the last anguish and the fiery escape of the martyred soul. He will not, as a novelist has done since, show us the gruesomeness of the scene at the stake. His sense of moral decency was Victorian. . . . The tenderness that hides under his aloof manner peeps out in the fond belief, unsupported for once by actual proof, that Jeanne did not die in the misery of disillusionment. 'The doubt of an hour was ended, she and her Saints were reconciled. She may have seen them through the vapour of fire.' And the pent-up emotion finds relief in bitter words: 'That the world might have no relic of her of

whom the world was not worthy, the English threw her ashes into the Seine.' We catch here the streak of pessimism which ran through Lang's haughty nature, curiously blending itself with his fighting temper, and with his keen relish for the adventures of the mind.

But in his quest for adventurous truth, he shirked none of the risks that offered; and we have still to examine how he dealt with the most difficult problems in his path. The case of Jeanne d'Arc raises thorny issues. What were her visions and her voices? How far was she mentally abnormal, and must she be ranked above or below average sanity? Can all mysterious elements be excluded from her life and career? Psychology presides over those questions, and psychology to-day has largely replaced the theology of Jeanne's age. It is not amiss to find out in what way Lang committed himself.

A formal classification of attitudes will put him very near Anatole France—much nearer than one would have expected. In his discreet way, he makes his position plain. The Roman Church has acted wisely in inserting Jeanne's 'pure and glorious name' in the roll-call of the Saints—the honour being, Lang hints, rather for the Saints. But we need not think of her otherwise than on a merely human plane. She did not work miracles, and she never attempted any. The few stories of that kind that crop up in some relations of her life can be easily dismissed. The two patron-bishops of Orleans were not seen, 'in a blaze of light, floating over the Tourelles at the moment of the assault', and Jeanne did not raise a child from the dead. On the other hand, 'there is no basis for

the Protestant idea that Jeanne was a premature believer in "Free Thought" and the liberty of private opinion. She was as sound a Catholic as man or woman could be, in matters of faith.' Again, her career, though marvellous, need not be pronounced supernatural. If her tactics, for example, were the only right tactics, no actual inspiration was necessary to conceive them. When all is said, there is no cause to place Jeanne outside the bounds of human nature. Only, the bounds of human nature—and that is where Lang and Anatole France part company—must not be fixed immovably by a narrow sectarianism of reason.

Nothing is gained by applying to the Maid the cut-and-dried formulae of psycho-pathology. To say, as Anatole France does, that she was 'perpetually hallucinated', is obviously wrong. Her vigorous sense of reality asserted itself upon every occasion. 'We always find Jeanne keenly alive to her surroundings, very vigilant and observant.' How, then, shall we interpret her visions and voices? It is one of Lang's main tenets that the claim to omniscience is the besetting sin of the scientist. The test of a healthy mind is the power of realizing where certainty ends. 'In fact, we do not know anything at all about the conditions which determine the advent of Voices, lights, and angels.' We can say with perfect safety that to Jeanne those phenomena were real. Parallel cases can be adduced in plenty. From the point of view of the common man, those occurrences were subjective and illusory; they may be regarded as hallucinatory states, projections of the subconscious mind. What they were in themselves, we are not able further to say, in the present condition of knowledge.

That effort to keep open the possibilities of experience, and leave the limits of the reality accessible to man in a fluid state, is the essence of Lang's endeavour. Jeanne read thought and possessed a faculty of clairvoyance. Her voices brought her premonitions. To her, in the strictest sense, coming events cast their shadows before. Most of her emphatic predictions were realized to the letter. She divined the King's secret; the buried sword of Fierbois was found at the place she described; she foretold the mode and the nature of her wounds. Of her capture, and even her death, she had clear intimations. It seems that, as F. W. H. Myers would have put it, she received messages from a subliminal self, more or less independent of space and time. Her power of anticipating the course of events would thus be founded on an intuitive grasp of her own deeper consciousness, and she would know things beforehand the better, as they concerned her more directly. That would explain how her more successful forecasts bore on her own future, and how her announcements were belied more often when they extended to wide circles of reality outside herself. It would, then, be no wonder that, as Lang points out, 'her normal self was not always on the level of her mysterious monitions'. At Rouen, 'she certainly had a presentiment that she would be free from bonds in three months, and she was, to the day, set free—through the gate of fire. She could not understand the promise thus, she did not always understand the sense of her Voices, but the coincidence is one of the many strange points in her experience which suggest that, in some way, she caught faint rumours and glimpses of things to be'.

Is such a view mystic and wild? To Lang it was strictly objective. He knew from experience what telepathy is, and he had, he tells us, several hallucinations, not to be distinguished, except by later evidence, from normal perceptions. The only scientific attitude, he thought, was to accept those undeniable facts, and put off their explanation until the time when they could have been properly investigated.

Was he content himself to wait? It would not be perfectly accurate to say that he was. Keeping strictly to his rule of the open mind, he allowed himself one other tentative step. In an Appendix to *The Maid of France*, he quotes the *Human Personality* of F. W. H. Myers, whose view as to Jeanne's case is like his own, and remarks that: 'In his first volume Mr. Myers regards Jeanne's monitions as arising from her "unaided" subliminal self. In his second volume he classes her as an ecstatic, and, in his definition of ecstasy, admits the intervention of extraneous spirits.' Now, Lang confesses very frankly to what he calls a similar 'bias'. The greatness of Jeanne, he tells us somewhere, 'was in her own spirit', and in 'something yet more widely interfused'. We are thus prepared for his final declaration: 'I incline to think' (here is the bias indeed!) 'that in a sense not easily defined, Jeanne was "inspired"'. Her inspiration would, then, be one of those facts which lie on the margin of accessible experience, and of which no valid demonstration can yet be given. Thus Lang in some respects abandons the position of the pure agnostic. But, while granting the Maid a possible source of strength beyond the limits of her own self, he lays stress more than ever upon the moral greatness which

was indisputably hers. 'I am convinced', he writes, 'that she was a person of the highest genius, of the noblest character. Without her genius and her character, her glimpses of hidden things (supposing them to have occurred) would have been of no avail in the great task of redeeming France. Another might have heard Voices offering the monitions; but no other could have displayed her dauntless courage and gift of encouragement; her sweetness of soul; and her marvellous and victorious tenacity of will'.

With those concluding words, so generous and sane, we can rest satisfied. We close Lang's book with the impression of having witnessed a drama, harmonized and softened by the magnanimity and the pity that redeem the sad heart of man.

Lang's life was then approaching its close. His last labours, all devoted to literature, were to end less than four years after the publication of *The Maid of France*.

Although based on a thorough sifting of evidence, the value of his book is not exactly documentary. Lang did not add much in substance to the researches of those honest biographers of Jeanne d'Arc, Quicherat, Siméon Luce, and others, whose works he quotes with handsome acknowledgement. His only contributions of some importance were unpublished details as to the size of the English preparations for the complete subjugation of France in 1428 (from the Exchequer Army Accounts); and the full text of Bedford's letter to Henry VI, incompletely published by Rymer, and quoted by Quicherat, which testifies to the demoralizing effect of Jeanne d'Arc's victories upon the English. The historical value of his effort lies elsewhere. He checked, for all that was in him, the spread of views to

which a conformity with current tendencies of the time lent an air of authority, and whose prestige was enhanced by the European reputation of an eminent writer. He vindicated the memory of a heroine whose pure unsullied beauty of heart and faith he could not bear to see tarnished in defiance both of truth and of chivalry. The world is indebted to him for one of the most precious benefits that can be conferred, the restoring of the balance of moral justice. And he painted a noble likeness, finely shaded, scrupulously exact, although loving and enthusiastic, of one of the greatest characters in history.

That is not all. Polished and exquisite as the art of Anatole France is, his book, after twenty-three years, has aged much more perceptibly than that of Andrew Lang. He wrote on the tide of a movement of thought which already, as he well knew, showed some sign of slackening. In spirit and conception, his *Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* belongs to the end of the nineteenth century. Lang, the conservative, the Jacobite, turned his back resolutely upon the present; but he never was a reactionary; he bore the pioneering spirit in his very attachment to the past. It soothed the yearning of his heart to reinstate old values on new grounds. The Maid was a star of his impassioned imagination, as was, on another plane, a very different woman, Mary Queen of Scots. In his defence of Jeanne d'Arc, as he had done in his study of religious origins, he drew from the store of facts, incompletely established but highly suggestive, of a recently developed branch of knowledge, the psychology of the subconscious mind. At all costs, he kept his fresh sense of moral things alive, and refused to bow before the last idol, that

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of a prematurely crystallized and arrested science. He followed the method of reason, but his rationalism, so to say, was psychological not logical and dogmatic. Thus he avoided the errors of system; not only did he perceive more sympathetically the nature of the object to which his mind was applied, and give us a supple, concrete, and penetrating portrait of Jeanne d'Arc, but his book, instead of bearing the imprint of yesterday's thought, is in deep-reaching harmony with that of to-day. It is all instinct with the breath of the vital, growing, adventurous research that opens new ways.